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Prestige Poll Jag Charged By Fulbright

He Says White House
And State Hide Facts
To Get Nixon Elected

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Staff Reporter

Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday charged both the White House and the State Department with deliberately "cuppressing" unfavorable information on United States prestige abroad—in order to get Vice President Richard M. Nixon elected.

Fulbright bluntly warned Nixon that if he should get elected "on a deception of this nature," congressional Democrats might find it "extremely difficult" to back him up with a bipartisan foreign policy.

The Washington Post in an exclusive story, reported yesterday that the findings of a top-level presidential committee show conclusively that United States prestige "has to go before the full Committee unquestionably on the decline ever since the USIA polls began, in October, 1957, coincident with the Soviet Union's Sputnik."

This committee is headed by Mansfield D. Sprague, vice president of the American Machine and Foundry Co. and, until 1958, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security.

White House Statement

Last night, the White House issued a special statement, quoting Chairman Sprague as saying:

"A newspaper story today with respect to the activities of the President's Committee on U. S. Information Activities Abroad is grossly in error.

"In the first place, this Committee has made no report. In the second place, it has made no findings. In the third place,

the Committee is concerning itself with ways and means of improving Government activities in the international information field. The Committee has made no conclusions as to the status of United States prestige abroad, and statements that it has done so are completely erroneous. That is not the business of this Committee. So much for that.

"Speaking personally, in my considered judgment, based on all the facts of which I am aware, the United States is today the most respected nation on the face of the earth and its prestige is preeminent."

In an interview with the United Press International in Chicago earlier in the day, Sprague declared that an assessment of United States prestige abroad would be "an important by-product" of his Committee's work.

Recognized as Issue

Sprague told the UPI he recognized that the question of American prestige was an important issue in the election campaign. But he specifically declined to comment on the Committee's findings to date. He said the final draft had yet to go before the full Committee.

As for whether the report eventually would be made public, Sprague told the UPI that was up to the President.

According to the Post story, out of 10 nations surveyed in polls ordered by USIA, nine think the Soviet Union is now out of the United States in world leadership, now and in the decade to come.

A source familiar with the Sprague Committee results said that interviews which the Committee conducted on its own, along with data and charts supplied by the Central Intelligence Agency, corroborated the USIA poll findings.

One of the things that disturbed Fulbright most was the Administration's refusal to inform him about the results of recent United States Information Agency polls that reflect on the United States "image" abroad — what other people think of us.

Subjected to Pressure

The Post also reported that the Sprague committee now is being subjected to increasing pressure to keep its findings secret, at least until after the election. Already the general tendency has been to water down some of the drafted conclusions.

Sen. John F. Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, declared: "The Washington Post story this morning underscores what Senator Kennedy has been saying about the dip in American prestige around the world. It is an interesting fact that this viewpoint should come from Administration sources."

Nixon has made repeated assertions during his campaign that "American prestige is at an all-time high."

Senator Fulbright, in a 1½-hour press conference on Capitol Hill yesterday, itemized a whole string of instances recently in which "legitimate public information" has been withheld both from him and his Committee, and from the public.

He found it unprecedented for the State Department to bend to the interests of a political candidate and asked: "What is the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to do? Are we going to have to create a new State Department? Or should we now send our own agents abroad to find out what is going on?"

Fulbright detailed a telephone conversation he had had Wednesday night with George V. Allen, USIA director, in which Allen refused to furnish the Senator with the copy of a summary of United States prestige polls which was given the National Security Council Aug. 29.

"He said this was a 'privileged matter,'" Fulbright recounted. "This was the policy of a department of government."

Fulbright then asked Allen if he had been "ordered" not to give out any information.

"He said, 'I'd prefer not to name names.' But I can assure you that there is no liaison between my office and information affecting the pub-

Draws 'Only Conclusion'

"This clearly indicates," Fulbright declared, "that there is an effort to prevent the utilization of legitimate information. . . . The only conclusion that a reasonable person can draw from these extreme measures is that these reports are even worse than reported."

Asked if he thought Nixon was behind the suppression order, Fulbright replied: "How would you interpret the statement of a man who doesn't want to name names, but who assures me he has 'full liaison' with the White House?"

"I think Mr. Nixon and all of the officers of the executive branch are fully aware of what these polls contain."

Asked if he was intimating that the White House ordered the poll material suppressed for partisan political purposes, Fulbright replied: "That is my conclusion."

Testimony Read Back

Fulbright also said he had read back to Allen testimony he had given before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Feb. 26, 1958. In which Allen declared:

"First and foremost, I think we should try to do everything we can to generate more public awareness inside the U. S. of the attitude abroad concerning the U. S. . . . Unless we Americans are reminded of it from time to time, we do not realize adequately what other people think of us, and sometimes we are not inclined to face facts as honestly and squarely as we might."

Fulbright said Allen told him that even though he could not release the USIA poll data, he still stood by his testimony.

The Senator also related how he had telephoned Oren M. Stephens, head of USIA poll evaluations, and had been told "he had been given specific orders not to discuss this evaluation report with me or anybody else on the Hill." Fulbright said that after repeatedly questioning Stephens he had been told the silence orders came "from the front office."

Other Instances Listed

Fulbright readily acknowledged that he had discussed the situation with some of Sen-

ator Kennedy's campaign advisers. But he said this doesn't detract from the need to have information affecting the pub-

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